Storm Hannah or no Storm Hannah?

Description

That is the question.

And the answer from the Met Office is no, not this weekend. Which left many people (including us) feeling quite confused as we read headlines like *“Hell storm Hannah”* and *“Britain to be battered by Storm Hannah”* in some national and regional news.

This weekend was wet and windy and the Met Office issued several wind, rain and snow warnings for many parts of the country. These warnings highlighted the impacts the weather would bring, such as the potential for flooding. However there can often be a fine line between whether a storm should be named or not and on this occasion, the low-pressure system did not meet the criteria to become a named storm.

> Many of us will see heavy #Rain on Saturday with the risk of localised flooding – warnings are in force so stay #WeatherAware pic.twitter.com/6HCxr5UAbA
>
> — Met Office (@metoffice) March 15, 2019

So what are the criteria for naming storms?

First, we consider the weather – how strong are the winds going to be? How much rain or snow is forecast and over how many hours? We then look at additional factors that can influence the impacts from the weather, such as the time of day or time of year – wind gusts of 60 mph in September when trees are still in leaf may have more damaging impacts than the same wind strengths in February, when trees are bare.

The Met Office and Met Éireann started jointly naming storms in 2014 with the aim of raising awareness of the potential impacts of severe weather in Britain and Ireland. In its fourth year running, the project has been very successful in quickly communicating the weather forecast to people, allowing them to plan and prepare for severe weather before it hits. Especially in the age of social media, a trending storm name e.g. #StormGareth can be a very powerful tool in quickly letting people, our partners and the media know severe weather is on the way.

Every year we publish the list of storm names in advance and it is perhaps understandable that some might be tempted to ‘jump the gun’ and name a weather system ‘early’, but this can cause confusion – particularly if as in this case it turns out there is no named storm.

When the Met Office or Met Éireann officially names a storm we will announce this on twitter, highlight the storm on the homepage of our website and include it in our video broadcasts which can be viewed on our weather app. So next time you aren’t sure whether or not a storm is on the way, please check here!

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March 2019

Will we see a record-breaking spring?

Description

There have been some headlines in the media in the last few days around predictions for a record-breaking spring in the UK.

It would appear these stories have been based, in part, on the latest Met Office three-month outlook produced for contingency planners.

This outlook is designed to help planners in business and Government assess the level of risk connected to different weather scenarios. As discussed previously, the outlook is not like a normal weather forecast. It does not identify weather for a particular day or week – so is not that useful when you want to know, for example, which spring weekend looks good for an outdoor event.

The outlook assesses global weather patterns and their potential to influence both temperature and rainfall for UK as a whole for the next three months. It is based on the more probable prevailing weather patterns and has to be used in the right context.

It is a bit like the science-equivalent of factoring the odds on a horse race and like any horse race it's always possible the favourite won't win. Users of the outlook are aware of the complexities and limitations of this type of forecast, and will include those factors in their decision making processes.

What does the current outlook for April-May-June 2019 say?

The current outlook explains that 'For both April and April-May-June, long-range prediction systems show small, but consistent signals, of an increase in the likelihood of high pressure. At this time of year, high pressure is usually associated with warmer-than-average weather. This, along with the tendency for higher UK temperatures seen in the last 10 years, leads to an increased chance of warmer-than-average conditions'.

This far from implies the UK will predominantly experience warm, dry weather, and does not mean there can't also be some colder spells. It is important to remember that higher-than-average temperatures won't necessarily feel like 'good' weather if there are spells of cloudy, windy or wet weather..

There is also a suggestion that drier-than-average conditions are slightly more likely than wetter-than-average, but the signal is small and the likelihood of extreme weather is close to normal during this period.

If you want a forecast for your area or are looking to plan up coming activities head to our forecasts pages for a detailed 7 day forecast or a 30 day look ahead at weather trends.

The challenge of long-range forecasting

The science of long-range forecasting is at the cutting edge of meteorology and the Met Office is leading the way in this area. As noted above, it doesn't offer us definitive forecasts but gives an assessment of risk. Influences on our weather from around the world help to steer our weather

patterns, but these influences are only part of the story, as our weather patterns exhibit substantial variability of their own.

We are continuing to work hard to develop the science of long-range forecasting, identifying new sources of predictability and building better prediction systems. We are confident that our long-range outlooks will progressively improve over time. In addition, we take into account predictions from other long-range forecasting centres around the world, so our outlooks will benefit as the science matures more widely.

The Met Office constantly reviews the accuracy of our forecasts across all time scales and is recognised by the World Meteorological Organization as one of the top two national weather forecasting services in the world. We also routinely verify our short-range forecasts on our website.

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